

## **Maria João Rodrigues attends interparliamentary conference on progressive economic policies in Berlin**

16 October 2015

Bundestag, Berlin

On 15-16 October, the SPD Group in the German Parliament organized a conference bringing together some 40 socialist members of national parliaments and of the European Parliament in order to discuss key economic issues where the socialist family is currently trying to push forward a European consensus. Regulation of the financial sector, fight against corporate tax avoidance, investment policies and further strengthening of the Eurozone were the key topics.

The main speech of the evening was given by German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, focusing on the refugee crisis and the on-going crisis of the Eurozone. These are two key challenges calling for more integration and more solidarity between Member States in order to keep stability and peace in Europe. As a junior partner in the German "grand coalition", the SPD are pushing for serious cooperation with other countries and the EU institutions when it comes to greater risk-sharing and solidarity in the Eurozone, as evidenced e.g. in the joint initiative of French and German economy ministers Macron and Gabriel (<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/03/europe-france-germany-eu-eurozone-future-integrate>). At the same time, large inflows of asylum-seekers pose a big challenge for Germany today. It is calling for solidarity from other Member States to relocate some of these asylum-seekers and process their applications, while building up stronger European foreign and security policy and external border protection.

Maria João Rodrigues spoke in the concluding session of the conference, following a keynote address by ECB Executive Board member, Benoît Cœuré, who made a strong case for further integration of the Eurozone. MJR emphasized the need for better policy coordination and for new European instruments that make renewed convergence in the Eurozone a reality. She noted that investment is now a key part of EU economic policy thanks to the pressure of socialists and democrats across Europe. Improved tax cooperation and fight against tax avoidance have also become key priorities thanks to the socialist family, and MJR agreed with German colleagues about the importance of better tax collection in order to strengthen national budgets and enable a meaningful Eurozone budget. From MJR's point of view, it will be crucial to define clearly in the coming months the right form of a Eurozone fiscal capacity with two main purposes: support to renewed convergence in productivity levels, and insurance against asymmetric shocks - for example a complementary European unemployment insurance scheme temporarily helping countries in economic downturn.